



Special Needs Project




In California, at least 124,000 children under the age of five have, or will develop, a disability or mental or behavioral disorder that can affect their future growth and development. At First 5 California, we want to make sure all kids get the best possible start in school and in life. To help make this happen, we are working to identify children with special needs early, including children not qualified for certain mandated services, by getting them the resources and support they need.

Accomplishments to Date: Addressing Special Needs

-  First 5 invested \$20 million to create its Special Needs Project, increasing services to thousands of California children with disabilities and special needs.
-  First 5's investment builds a sustainable system of services by providing more than 5,000 annual screenings for early identification, increasing access to diagnosis and referrals, and providing extensive family and community outreach.
-  The project operates through 10 county demonstration sites including El Dorado, Los Angeles, Mendocino, Merced, Monterey, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, San Francisco and Sonoma counties.



Through its Special Needs Project, First 5 California is demonstrating its solid commitment to California's children with disabilities and other special needs.

-  Young children currently aren't receiving crucial services because of a confusing patchwork of programs.
-  Early screening and detection is important to helping children with disabilities and other special needs identify conditions that may affect their health, social and emotional development, and learning abilities if left untreated.
-  In the 2004-2005 school year, nearly 70,000 children age 0 to 5 enrolled in special education services in California.

"My daughter was having behavior problems. She would have tantrums and bang her head on the floor. She hit people and slobbered all over herself. The Special Needs program referred me to Parent Child Interaction Therapy. I learned how to control my daughter's behavior and how she can control her own behavior. After two years her preschool teacher told me she's made good progress in her education and behavior. The Special Needs Program has been very good for my whole family."

– Adriana Santiago, First 5 Riverside parent